

Sanctuary First

December 2012

Theme Summary - God Among Us

Scripture Focus: John 1:14-18

Background

Bethlehem changes our perspective on God. Instead of looking up to the heavens, we look down on a manger. Instead of being amazed at the majesty of God, we are surprised by the humility of God. Instead of God beyond us, we find God among us. Instead of God as spirit, we encounter God in the flesh. Instead of the unknown God, God has a face. God is no longer distant. God is here. But where do we see this elusive God, who chooses a stable over a palace and a cross over a throne?

Focus

It's such an amazing thing that God himself came into our world, hard to imagine what it must have been like for those first people encountering Jesus and recognising who he really was. Over the centuries the story has grown arms and often legs in the re-telling and re-imagining. But Jesus told the believers we would encounter God. What might such a meeting be like in our lives, our culture? How would we know the moment? Perhaps there have already been such holy moments.

Setting the Scene

Meditational music playing. Invitation card given to people as they enter to sit and watch screen, wander round display, light an advent candle(s) and think of people all round the world awaiting Christmas

Candles all round the church, everyone as they come in has a chance to light an/ some advent candles

Video –loop display of photos from round the world, 'happy Christmas in different languages, Oxfam goats, people receiving Blythswood boxes etc

Also local display of photos of contacts round the world and 'happy christmas' written in different languages and scripts, Oxfam goats etc, people receiving Blythswood shoeboxes – these could be both still pictures up on the walls etc and a rolling display on the screen and people are to stroll around and have a look

Also display John 1 14-18 words on posters, possibly in various translations.

Flashing Christmas lights. Party poppers, whistles. Morph into 'Slade: Merry Christmas Everyone' and call everyone together

Item	Notes
DISCUSSION	<p>Discussion of the rituals and habits for Christmas different people present have experienced in family and church. Could be scribed up on a flipchart. What would you really want to keep?</p> <p>Affirm the importance to all of us of a rhythm of life and rituals to mark it – for our health, for our sense of security but clearly some parts just accumulate over time</p>
PRESENTATION	<p>Polythene Christmas, see attached presentation and script.</p> <p>But is this really how God appears mostly to us – either in the traditional telling of Christmas or the commercialised one...or is it often more humdum....?</p>
VIDEO	Story 'Holy Potato' from 'Seen God Lately?' by Richard Adams
REFLECTION	<p>What sort of conversation might God have with you?</p> <p>Imagine he had moved into the neighbourhood as our key verse says. Looking back over the last week, have any conversations you've had looked like 'God' moments?</p> <p>If he'd sat by you in front of the tv, what would you have watched?</p> <p>What might you have said?</p>
CAIRN	<p>Take a stone and where there was a bit of a 'holy' moment like the story, paint a symbol meaningful to you, a stripe or spot to mark each time. Add it to the cairn.</p>
PRAYER	Draw all these acts of worship together with a prayer
VIDEO	Joan Osborne song 'One of us'
BLESSING	

The Polythene Christmas

Long ago in **past times** God looked down on the earth and saw a **gap** in our lives. He decided to do something special. He sent an angel to a young **virgin** named Mary who told her she would soon be pregnant with a baby boy who would be Saviour of the world. She was stunned and bewildered but agreed to **cooperate**. When Mary was heavily pregnant she had to travel for a census to David's city, Bethlehem. We think she travelled by donkey, not the most **safe way** for **going places** in her condition. When she and her husband Joseph arrived in Bethlehem the hotels were all full but they found shelter in a stable, not her **first choice**. During the night Mary gave birth to a **lidl** baby and called him Jesus. The baby didn't have any special luxuries but he did have his **mother's care**. The **next** thing that happened was that shepherds came to the stable to see the baby and join in the **celebrations**. The reigning king Herod, was getting to big for his **boots** and when he heard from **3** wise men that a baby had been born who would be a king in his own right he threatened to **takeaway** all new born babies. The **3** wise men were not put off, however but followed a **star(buck)** which was so bright that they thought at first it was a **comet**. It led them to the baby where they gave their gifts to the child. That is why we buy and give presents today but please don't make shopping and presents the **focus** of your Christmas this year. Remember **asda** holy bible say God loves you so much that he was prepared to send his only son into the world **4u**. Accept Jesus into your heart for he is the greatest gift you will find anywhere this Christmas. He is the link between heaven and earth and fills our lives with hope and peace and strength. I am convinced he is the **top man** for all the days of your life.